

# KENT CONNECTIONS

A Newsletter Published by Kent County Levy Court for its Employees

April 2008



## Employee of the Month

*Sabrina Fite*

The Kent County Employee Council has selected SABRINA W. FITE from the Department of Planning Services as the April 2008 Employee of the Month.

Sabrina, a GIS Specialist in the Geographic Information Systems Division, has worked with Kent County for two and one-half years, and is primarily responsible for accurately assigning street addresses to new homes and businesses for the enhanced 9-1-1 emergency dispatch system. She has been instrumental in several successful projects including the readdressing of High Point Mobile Home Park and the huge military personnel housing reconstruction project at Dover Air Force Base.

Recently Sabrina was recognized by the Smyrna/Clayton Customer Advisory Council for helping the group better understand the County's 9-1-1 addressing and road naming standards.

Supervisors praise Sabrina for her professionalism and wealth of complex GIS knowledge. Fellow employees appreciate her willingness to help anyone in need of assistance no matter how difficult the situation. She is also recognized for her great personality, kind heart, quick wit and friendly smile.

Congratulations Sabrina on a job well done!

### COMING NEXT MONTH:

- > Who is Kent County's favorite Admin. Professional?
- > What are the new dependent health ins. rates?
- > What are the final figures of the FY2009 budget?

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## Employee Council elects new officers & plans new year

By Allan Kujala, Personnel Director

Employee Council met for the first time last month following the February elections and selected its leadership for the upcoming year.

The group elected BRENT MOLLOHAN, Recreation Program Supervisor II in the Department of Community Services, as President; elected LORI SHORT, Permit Technician I in the Department of Planning Services, as Vice-President; re-elected MICHELE LAPINSKI, Account Specialist II in the Department of Community Services, as Secretary; and elected JAYNE ZERANSKI, Administrative Secretary in the Department of Public Works, as Treasurer.

The new Council got right down to work by discussing upcoming employee events, including the Employee Appreciation Day picnic in June, and other pending issues.

In addition to selecting the Employee of the Month, organizing and hosting the annual Employee Picnic, Holiday Dinner/Dance, and the Holiday Luncheon, the Employee Council regularly provides input to the County Administrator and Personnel Director on employee issues.

"We want to increase employee participation this year by creating new and exciting ideas," commented President Mollohan. "We look forward to serving you."



**Brent Mollohan**



**Lori Short**



**Michele Lapinski**



**Jayne Zeranski**

## A Monthly Contest

A free movie ticket will be given to the first two employees who find the last four digits of his/her Social Security number in the current issue of Kent Connections and contacts the Personnel Office at 744-2310. HILARY WELLIVER of the Division of Libraries found her number and claimed her movie ticket in March. It's easy to win, just read your newsletter! \*\*1964\*\* \*\*3511\*\*



## Kent Co. Employee Obsessions

Take a minute to visit the display case on the main floor of the Kent County Administrative Complex which features a unique collection of Angels amassed over the years by Tax Office Cashier KAREN COOPER. On the second floor, Permit Technician LORI SHORT has displayed her menagerie of Boyd's Bears.



Got an interesting hobby or like to collect limited edition baubles? How about a collection of trinkets from far-away lands? Then show off your talent for amassing things—it may interest others as well.


## HOW TO BE EXCEPTIONAL

ACHIEVEMENT ORIENTATION—c. Maintain a sense of urgency regarding all work objectives through continual availability to perform additional work with little notice and/or support; d. Meet all established measures of excellence; e. Regularly review/solicit input on performance and make ongoing adjustments to improve individual and organizational performance.

**G.A.U.G.E.**—Kent Co's performance assessment tool

## Go Green Kent Co!

Use your local library and other public amenities

 Borrowing from libraries, instead of buying personal books and movies, saves money and printing resources. Be an active civic participant and ensure that the public spaces in your town/county are well maintained to promote a sustainable community.



## EOM INSIGHT



**Name:** SABRINA FITE

**Job:** GIS Specialist – 9-1-1 Addressing

**Years with the County:** Almost three

**Education:** Mining and mineral exploration

**What I like most about my job:** Being a part of public safety

**What I'd most like to change:** My computer! Need more RAM!

**Family:** Husband

**Favorite new movie:** The Dark Knight (Heath will rock the Joker)

**Favorite old movie:** Legends of the Fall

**Favorite TV show:** Law & Order SVU

**Favorite TV show as a child:** Glo Worms

**Favorite sport:** Hockey – Go Flames!

**Favorite meal:** Filet Mignon with horseradish and a baked potato

**Favorite music:** Electronics

**Favorite Kent County restaurant:** Where Pigs Fly

**I'm most proud of:** Creating new patterns for my knitting business

**Pet peeve:** Persons who put on a façade for gain or acceptance

**Motto:** "So's your face!"

**If I've learned one thing in life, it's:** What goes around will come around – Karma baby!

**Who has had the most impact on my life:** My husband

**If I won a million dollars, I would:** Scream like a pageant winner

**You'd be surprised to learn that I:** Am scared of the wind

**The most adventurous thing I've ever done is:** Climb the Great Wall in 104 degree heat

**Three words that describe me:** Short, loyal, determined \*\*1054\*\*

## Congratulations

Congratulations to BEN SACKKEY (Systems Analyst Administrator) on his marriage to Hannah Cann, originally from Ghana, on March 19, 2008. The nuptials was officiated by Deputy Clerk of the Peace FRAN MOORE. The couple resides in Dover.

# Levy Court reviews draft FY09 budget

By Allan Kujala, Personnel Director

Declining revenue projections and a troubled national economy made it significantly challenging for County Administrator MIKE PETIT de MANGE to prepare his first balanced budget for presentation to Levy Court last month.



The current FY2008 budget was developed by former County Administrator Robert McLeod before his retirement in April 2007.

With help from Finance Director SUSAN DURHAM and Audit Analyst DEBBIE ELDERS, the County Administrator was able to reduce existing expenses by \$3.2 million for the upcoming year and at the same time incorporate a \$68,000 increase for dog control expenses as mandated by the State Legislature two years ago. Dog control is currently handled through a State contract with the SPCA, but will be fully paid by the three Counties on a pro-rata basis beginning in Fiscal Year 2010.

In addition to absorbing the dog control mandate, Petit de Mange was able to work in ever-increasing fuel costs, two new vehicles, two more paramedics, and a wills clerk in the busy Register of Wills Office, among other lesser items in the proposed budget.

The Levy Court Commissioners wrapped up its review of the recommended \$23.5 million general fund and \$14.1 million sewer fund budgets (plus another \$36.8 million for the 5-year capital budget) late last month after resolving a number of issues, so the budget document can be introduced for public hearing this month.

The proposed budget, which was developed after several Levy Court meetings, is scheduled to be introduced on April 8, and proposes a 3% cost of living adjustment pay increase for employees in addition to the normal 2% step increase for effective per-

*(Continued on Page 14)*

# Health insurance RFP eyes 9.9% rate increase

By Allan Kujala, Personnel Director

True to its estimate last year, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Delaware responded to the County's annual health insurance RFP last month with a proposed 9.9 percent rate increase.

The County earlier this year attempted to convince Blue Cross to simply renew the existing program without a rate increase, but it expressed continuing concern about a couple of "shock" claims for heart ailments last year.

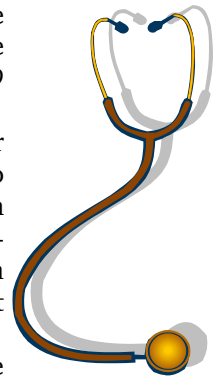
The increase comes on the heels of a 6.6% decrease last year and a modest 9.24% increase the year before when the County changed insurers after eight years with Mid-Atlantic Health Plan—which had been acquired by Blue Cross.

In a typical year, the County would receive numerous proposals for a fully insured or self-insured health insurance plan, but this year only Blue Cross and Aetna responded—which proposed a 13.6 rate increase.

For FY2010, Blue Cross is projecting a 10.26% trend increase. The new FY09 rate increase will have a modest impact on the premiums employees have to pay for dependent health care coverage—with the average being about \$25.27 more per month.

The Levy Court has not yet formally selected a health insurance provider for employees/retirees effective July 1, 2008. The Personnel Office is reviewing the financial impact of each proposal, examining the proposals for responsiveness, and seeking further explanation or clarification.

The final selection of the County's health insurance plan will be determined by Levy Court this month as part of the final budget adoption process.



## High Praise

Kudos to KATHY SKINNER, Planning Division, for a Constituent Comment Card praising her for being "very helpful and cordial." *Outstanding!!*



## ON THE MOVE. . .

Compiled by Yvonne Messina, Personnel Technician I

### New Hire

03/14/08 RICHARD ALLEN, Paramedic I, Grade 10, Public Safety/Emergency Medical Services

### Milestones

03/10/1988 SOPHIE DEAR, Personnel Technician II—20 years

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR



April 2, 2008 - Blood Pressure Checks at the Wastewater Facility from 2:00-4:00 p.m.

April 6 - 12, 2008 - National County Government Week.

April 9, 2008 - L&W Insurance rep. available to answer health insurance questions from 1:00-2:00 p.m., Kent County Administrative Complex, Room 214.

April 9, 2008 - Blood Pressure Checks at Library at 9:00 a.m., Kent County Administrative Complex, Room 257 from 9:30 - 11:30 a.m.

April 16, 2008 - Staff Development Session will be held at 9:00 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. in Room 220 A/B in the Kent County Administrative Complex.

April 23, 2008 - Administrative Professional Day. Thank your clerical staff.

April 26, 2008 - Celebrate Earth Day with the Parks Division by reforesting the Northern Section of Big Oak County Park south of Smyrna from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Rain or Shine. No Rain Date.

## Kings Dominion offers discounts

Enjoy a day of family fun at Kings Dominion! New this year is Dominator, the World's Longest Floorless Coaster! Fly through gut-wrenching loops, rolls and corkscrews at speeds up to 65 MPH.

Kings Dominion is located 20 miles north of Richmond, VA and 75 miles south of Washington, DC, Exit 98 on I-95.

Look for discount single day admission tickets in the April 4 pay envelope. These are good Saturdays and Sundays through May 18<sup>th</sup>. The Park opened this year on March 22 and the WaterWorks opens May 24<sup>th</sup>. Discount tickets may be purchased

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## COUNTY BIRTHDAYS



### APRIL

- 01 Gale Maas, Administration
- 01 Mari Fabres, Public Works/WWF
- 03 Martha Lewis, Deeds Office
- 03 Terri Misiewicz, Finance
- 03 Jason Miller, Public Works/Engineering
- 03 Joshua Norris, Public Safety/Emergency Comm.
- 04 Tami Edwards, Administration/IT
- 06 Kathryn Ridgway, Public Safety/Emerg. Comm.
- 07 Marty Hayes, Clerk of the Peace Office
- 09 M. Karen Cooper, Tax Office
- 10 Mark Horton, Public Safety/EMS
- 11 George Kuerner, Public Works/WWF
- 11 Craig Harvey, Public Works/WWF
- 13 Sofia Culver, Finance
- 15 Sarah Keifer, Planning Services Director
- 16 Donna Zerhusen, Finance
- 16 Michael Bishop, Public Safety/EMS
- 17 Rodney Smith, Planning Services/Planning
- 18 George DeBenedictis, Planning Services/I&E
- 24 Ronald Berry, Public Works/Engineering
- 25 Robert Watts, Public Safety/Emergency Comm.
- 25 Melissa Smith, Public Safety/EMS
- 27 Richard Mosley, Public Works/Facilities Mgt.
- 28 Daniel McLaughlin, Public Safety/Emerg. Comm.
- 29 Keith Mumford, Community Servs./Recreation
- 30 Darren Jones, Public Safety/EMS

### MAY

- 01 Jill Johns, Planning Services
- 02 Harry VanSant, Director of Community Services
- 04 Trey Holland, Planning Services/I&E
- 05 Ronald Eby, Board of Assessment
- 05 Jack Loftin, Public Safety/Emergency Comm.
- 10 Audrey Stanford, Assessment Office
- 12 Dale Jones, Planning Services/I&E
- 15 Patrick Quillen, Community Services/Parks
- 15 Sheila Ross, Assessment Office
- 19 Terry Gentry, Public Works/Facilities Management
- 19 Jennifer Immediato, Public Safety/EMS
- 19 Joshua Bushey, Planning Services/I&E
- 21 Jennifer Donavon, Planning Services/Planning
- 22 Richard Washington, Public Works/WWF
- 24 Mary Ellen Gray, Planning Services/Planning
- 26 Larry Warner, Sheriff's Office
- 28 Keith Powell, Public Works/WWF



## **Support for workers comp pool dries up**

*By Allan Kujala, Personnel Director*

Earlier this year, it appeared a proposal by the Delaware League of Local Governments might lead to substantial cost savings on insurance premiums through the formation of a pool for workers compensation insurance with member municipalities and county governments.

Last month, Levy Court was informed by its insurance consultant, Scott Agar of Insurance Buyer's Council, that he could not recommend the "DELEA Founders Insurance Trust" due to a small initial membership, inadequate pool assets, and a premium that is \$100,000 higher than the current insurer has offered for next year.

In light of the report, County staff recommended against joining the pool at this time. Staff continued to support the pool concept and suggested the matter be revisited later when the market hardens and rates increase again. For its \$15.5 million payroll, Kent County is currently expecting to pay \$482,265 in workers compensation premiums for the 2007-08 fiscal year to the current insurer, but Technology Insurance Co. estimates a premium of only \$350,220 in 2008-09, much less than the \$454,600 assessment proposed by DELEA.

The lower premium was helped by a 15% across the board reduction in workers compensation premiums ordered by the Insurance Commissioner.



## *Long-Time Receiver of Taxes Laura Belle Wilson passes*

*By Sophie F. Dear, Personnel Technician II*

Kent County lost a dear friend on March 10, 2008, when retired Receiver of Taxes and County Treasurer LAURA BELLE WILSON passed away. Mrs. Wilson began her career with the County on August 17, 1974. She served as Account Clerk II and Deputy Receiver of Taxes, and on June 5, 1979, was sworn in by the late Judge Bush as Receiver of Taxes and County Treasurer. Mrs. Wilson was the first woman to hold that position. Her most recent term of office was to expire on June 3, 1991, so she decided to retire effective June 1, 1991.

I contacted some County employees who were here when Mrs. Wilson was Receiver of Taxes for their memories of her.

According to JANET MORRIS, of the County Administrator's Office, Mrs. Wilson was "always smiling, always pleasant, and most of the time had a camera in her hand. It was the little things that made her a real sweet person. She always made everyone feel special by speaking to them."

JANET LLOYD of the Recorder of Deeds Office remembered that Mrs. Wilson was "always a pleasant person, short like me, a very social woman, . . . just my size!"

Retiree LEROY DEAR recalled that she always knew who you were and would sit down and talk to you. If she knew you, she knew your family and would ask about them.

I worked in Mrs. Wilson's office during my  
*(Continued on Page 6)*

## *Dear earns benefits administrator certification*

*By Allan Kujala, Personnel Director*

The Administration Department is proud to announce that SOPHIE DEAR, Personnel Technician II in the Personnel Office, was awarded the designation "Certified Government Benefits Administrator" by the State & Local Governments Benefits Association last month at the organization's annual training conference in San Diego.

In order to achieve CGBA certification, an individual must be employed in the public sector benefits arena, participate in over 40 hours of bene-

fits training and workshops, and receive approval from the SALGBA Board of Directors.

Sophie holds a Bachelors degree in Human Resource Management from Wilmington College and two Master's Degrees in Public Administration and Human Resource Management also awarded by Wilmington College.



Please join the Administration Department in congratulating Sophie for this milestone in her 20-year career with the County.

## FROM THE STACKS



By Bonni Capobianco, Evening Librarian

### Rhett Butler's People

by Donald McCaig

Have you ever wondered about the other side of the Gone with the Wind story?

Donald McCaig was chosen by Margaret Mitchell's estate to write this partner book to the epic novel. Rhett's story begins with his checkered past in Charleston and spans beyond the conclusion of Gone with the Wind. Mr. McCaig does a wonderful job of melding the two books and movie together into a single tapestry.

If you are a fan of Gone with the Wind, you are going to be critical of how he might piggy-back off of that book. In Rhett Butler's People, he managed to include much of the story while examining Rhett's story in parallel with Scarlett's. Much like Gone with the Wind, he weaves the characters in and out of the story. When Scarlett returns to Tara during Sherman's siege, we follow Rhett and his late start in the Confederacy. We truly get to follow the other side of the story.

The book may not stand on its own, but for those that know and love Gone with the Wind it's a very well-done companion piece. I found myself enjoying the revisiting of the Old South and the classic story, as well as learning more about the other characters and Rhett's side of the story.

My hat's off to Donald McCaig for taking on such a difficult project and giving us a great read.

## Discount Movie Tickets

Discount movie tickets to Dover Mall's Carmike Theaters are available for sale in the Personnel Office.



The discount tickets cost \$6.00 each and can be used at any scheduled time, but cannot be used during the first 14 days of any Sony® movie. All other movie studios allow ticket use at any time. \*\*4857\*\*

## Recipe of the Month

By Sophie F. Dear, Personnel Technician II

### SHELLS WITH TUNA AND CAPERS

- 1 package (16 ounces) medium shell pasta
- Salt
- 1 medium lemon
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic (crushed with press)
- ¼ teaspoon crushed red pepper
- 2 cans (6 ounces each) tuna in water (drained and flaked)
- ¼ cup capers (drained and chopped)
- 1 cup packaged fresh Italian parsley leaves (chopped)

In saucepot, prepare pasta in boiling salted water as label directs.

Meanwhile, from lemon, grate 1 teaspoon peel, and squeeze 2 tablespoons juice. In 10-inch skillet, heat olive oil over medium heat. Add garlic and crushed red pepper, and cook, stirring, 30 seconds. Add tuna, capers, lemon juice, lemon peel, and ¼ teaspoon salt, and cook 2 minutes.

When pasta has cooked to desired doneness, remove ½ cup pasta cooking water. Drain pasta and return to saucepot. Add parsley, tuna mixture, and reserved pasta cooking water; toss well.

Serves 6.

Recipe courtesy [goodhousekeeping.com](http://goodhousekeeping.com)

## Laura Belle Wilson passes

(Continued from Page 5)

earlier time with the County. She was always a professional woman and the State of Delaware's biggest supporter of Joe Biden. Oh, how she loved that man! She also loved taking photos during County events and clipping items from newspapers about County offices. She would periodically go through her files of clippings and give me items about the County's Emergency Communications Center to give to Leroy. She was family-oriented, and very proud of her granddaughters.

SHARON BEAN of the Assessment Office recalls that "Aunt Belle" loved her men! When she was ill, Sen. Carper went to visit her at Capitol Nursing (Continued from Page 8)

## *Learn how to help save the environment at next staff development*

By Sophie F. Dear, Personnel Technician II

Attendees at the first session of **"the green book:**



**The Everyday Guide to Saving the Planet One Simple Step at a Time"** discussed cost- and earth-saving measures for the home (composting, appliances, cooking, food storage containers, trash bags, even

shower curtains), entertainment (books, candy, CDs, DVDs, gift wrap, newspapers and magazines, restaurants, and e-waste), travel (adventure travel, cruises, eco-tourism, hotels, maps, and luggage tags), communication and technology (answering machines versus voice mail, computers, headsets, pagers, PDAs, and power usage), and school (bicycles, buses, car-pooling, blackboard erasers, and crayons made from soybean oil).

We hope to complete the remainder of **"the green book"** in one more session. The sessions will be held Wednesday, **April 16, 2008, at 9:00 a.m. and 3:30 p.m.** in room 220 A/B in the Kent County Administrative Complex. Please note that the time for the first session will be 8:30 a.m., instead of the usual 9:00 a.m. session.

To sign up for training, please contact me in Personnel at 744-2312, by e-mail (if you have a list), or in person. If you initially forget to sign up and wish to attend, or discover that you will be able to attend on the day of the training session -- show up and sign in.

County employees who attended a March session for the first part of **"the green book"** were JUNE GLADDEN, KATHY GOODEN, EVELYN JOPP, GALE MAAS, YVONNE MESSINA, SHEILA ROSS, and JAMES WELSH.

Thank you for your continued interest in employee development!

\* \* \*

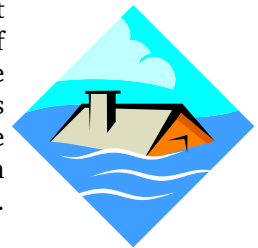
*A child's life is like a piece of paper on which every person leaves a mark.*

**Chinese Proverb**

## **Prepare now to safely respond to flood/rising water**

By David Mick, EMS Operations Support Officer

The recent flooding in the Midwest and the history of flooding in areas throughout Delaware should prompt all of us to be as prepared as possible for the next time the waters around us begin to rise. Here are some terms and tips with which you should be familiar. (from FEMA website)



### **Flood Watch:**

Flooding is possible. Tune in to NOAA Weather Radio, commercial radio, or television for information.

### **Flash Flood Watch:**

Flash flooding is possible. Be prepared to move to higher ground; listen to NOAA Weather Radio, commercial radio, or television for information.

### **Flood Warning:**

Flooding is occurring or will occur soon; if advised to evacuate, do so immediately.

### **Flash Flood Warning:**

A flash flood is occurring; seek higher ground on foot immediately.

### **During a Flood**

If a flood is likely in your area, you should:

- Listen to the radio or television for information.
- Be aware that flash flooding can occur. If there is any possibility of a flash flood, move immediately to higher ground. Do not wait for instructions to move.
- Be aware of streams, drainage channels, canyons, and other areas known to flood suddenly. Flash floods can occur in these areas with or without such typical warnings as rain clouds or heavy rain.
- If you must prepare to evacuate, you should do the following:
  - Secure your home. If you have time, bring in outdoor furniture. Move essential items to an upper floor. Turn off utilities at the main switches or valves if instructed to do so. Disconnect electrical appliances. Do not touch electrical equipment if you are wet or standing in water.

**(Continued on Page 10)**

## EMPLOYEE COUNCIL NEWS



By Michele Lapinski, Employee Council Secretary

The latest incarnation of the Employee Council met for the first time on March 11, and one of its first pieces of business was the election of new officers: President, BRENT MOLLOHAN; Vice-President, LORI SHORT; Treasurer, JAYNE ZERANSKI; and once again, MICHELE LAPINSKI, Secretary.

In other business, a tentative date for the annual Employee Appreciation Picnic has been set for June 11 on the grounds of the main administration building. More information on this Levy Court-sponsored event will be forthcoming via *Kent Connections* and email.

As part of its fund-raising efforts, the Council will be holding a Car Wash on May 9 at the main administration building. Timed reservations will be sold for \$5 (standard passenger cars/trucks/minivans only please). Stay tuned for more information.

Congratulations to SABRINA FITE from GIS who was chosen as the Employee of the Month for April 2008. In addition to a day off with pay, Sabrina will also receive a \$100 stipend. Way to go!

If you know of a co-worker who has excelled and/or gone above and beyond in the performance of their job duties, then nominate them for Employee of the Month. Nomination forms are available in the central mail room and also on the v: drive under forms. Submitted nomination forms are eligible for a three month period and may be re-submitted.

Your current Employee Council: President BRENT MOLLOHAN, Vice-President LORI SHORT, Treasurer JAYNE ZERANSKI, Secretary MICHELE LAPINSKI, members KIM DIXON, YVONNE MESSINA and PAT ORONA. \*\*3183\*\* \*\*0312\*\* \*\*6704\*\*

## Laura Belle Wilson passes

(Continued from Page 6)

Home and strolled her around in her wheelchair. He kissed her goodbye and she said, "Give me another kiss."

After a few hospitalizations, Mrs. Wilson moved from Harrington to Heritage at Dover, where she got right into the swing of things and was able to enjoy their social activities for several years before her health forced her to move to Capitol Nursing Home.

## Tech Talk



### Are you looking to upgrade from that clunky dial-up connection to high-speed Internet access?

By Mary Ratliff, Network Specialist

While most Internet users still surf over a dial-up connection, many are eyeing faster speeds. Almost half of households using dial-up are interested in upgrading to broadband this year, according to a study by Parks Associates. U.S. consumers are now more aware of the value of broadband, but consumer demand for broadband will ultimately be tempered by accessibility to service, subscription costs, and the availability of meaningful content and services.

Broadband Internet is high speed internet that offers a high rate of data transmission. Broadband Internet includes DSL Internet, Cable Internet, Wireless Internet and Fiber Optic broadband. A Broadband Internet Connection is capable of transmitting and receiving 256 KBPS or more. Also, Broadband Internet is always on, so you can access the internet anytime you need. With Broadband Internet you can play online games, download music and video files, and receive real time services without interruptions or long waiting times. You don't need to dial every time to your ISP, you just need to start your computer and open your browser to surf.

- **DSL** stands for "Digital Subscriber Line". DSL is a type of high speed internet connection that uses your existing copper telephone line. DSL gives you high speed internet connection without interrupting your telephone line because it uses a different line of telephone line which is not in use.

- **Cable Internet** gives you high speed internet connection using your digital cable TV line. This is always ON type internet connection means you can even attain your telephone calls while you are surfing through internet.

- **Wireless Internet** gives you access to World Wide Web (WWW) or Internet email via wireless network. Wireless Internet does not use a telephone line or any cable network. Big plus of Wireless Internet is that you can access internet even if you are out of home or office.

**Fiber Optic (FIOS)** uses fiber optic cables  
(Continued on Page 12)



## April is National Donate Life Month—98K & counting

By Sophie F. Dear, Personnel Technician II, from NCPG/DCGP

In April, people across the U.S. make a special effort to celebrate the tremendous generosity of those who have saved lives by becoming organ, tissue, marrow, and blood donors and to encourage more Americans to follow their fine example.

As of 1:45 p.m. on Wednesday, March 26, 2008, the number of waiting list candidates was 98,570. The number of people needing a life-saving transplant continues to rise faster than the number of available donors. Roughly 300 new transplant candidates are added to the waiting list each month. In 2007 there were 28,353 transplants from 14,394 donors. Each day about 77 people get the organ transplant that gives them a second chance, but 17 to 19 others die from not receiving a transplant.

Each organ/tissue donor saves or improves the lives of as many as 50 people. Giving the "Gift of Life" may lighten the grief of the donor's family. Many donor families say that knowing other lives have been saved helps them cope with their loss. To get started, register with your state donor registry, if one is available, and designate your decision on your driver's license (in Delaware, go to <https://citizen.dmv.de.gov/organdonor/organdonor.ejs>).

Sign a donor card, carry it with you, and talk to your family. To help your family understand and carry out your wishes, sit down with them and discuss your decision to be an organ/tissue donor. They can serve as your advocate and may be asked to give consent for donation or provide information to the transplant team.

Organs that can be donated include the heart, kidneys, pancreas, lungs, liver, and intestines. Tissues include cornea, skin, heart valves, bone, blood vessels, and connective tissue. Additionally, bone marrow/stem cells, umbilical cord blood, and peripheral blood stem cells (PBSC) can be donated.

More than half the people on the waiting list for a donated organ are racial or ethnic minorities. Chances of getting a transplant increase if donor and recipient share the same racial/ethnic background. Minorities overall have a very high need for organ transplants because some diseases of the kidney, heart, lung, pancreas, and liver are found more frequently in racial and ethnic minority populations than in the general population. For example, African

Americans, Asians and Pacific Islanders, and Hispanics are three times more likely than Whites to suffer from end-stage renal (kidney) disease, often as the result of high blood pressure and other conditions that can damage the kidneys. Native Americans are four times more likely than Whites to suffer from diabetes. Some of these conditions that can result in organ failure are best treated through transplantation and others can only be treated by this life-saving procedure. In addition, similar

blood type is essential in matching donors to recipients. Because certain blood types are more common in ethnic minority populations, increasing the number of minority donors can increase the frequency of minority transplants. For more information on minorities and organ donation, visit the Web site of the National Minority Organ Tissue Transplant Education Program at [www.mottep.org](http://www.mottep.org) (not a U.S. Government Web site).

You can indicate your intent to donate (persons younger than 18 years of age must have a parent's or guardian's consent). Medical suitability for donation is determined at the time of death. There are no age limits on who can donate; donation depends on your physical condition, not age. Newborns and senior citizens have been organ donors.

Signing an organ donor card will not affect the quality of medical care you receive at the hospital. The medical team trying to save your life is separate from the transplant team. Every effort is made to save your life before donation is considered.

There are no costs to the family of the donor. The family pays for the donor's medical care and funeral costs, but not for organ donation. Costs related to donation are paid by the recipient, usually through insurance, Medicare, or Medicaid.

Even if you sign a donor card it is essential that your family know your wishes. Your family may be asked to sign a consent form in order for your donation to occur. If you wish to learn how organ donation preferences are documented and honored where you live, contact your local organ procurement organization (OPO). The OPO can advise you of specific local procedures, such as joining donor registries available to residents in your area.

You can donate if you have a previous medical condition. Professionals will evaluate the cond-



(Continued on Page 10)

## **National Donate Life Month**

**(Continued from Page 9)**

ition of your organs at the time of death and determine if your organs are suitable for donation. You should consider yourself a potential organ/tissue donor, indicate your intent to donate on your driver's license, donor card, or state donor registry, and discuss your decision with family members.

Donated organs are distributed by matching patients to organs based on a number of factors including blood and tissue typing, medical need, time on the waiting list, and geographical location.

In the U.S., living donations of a kidney can be made to a family member, friend, or anyone on the waiting list. Living donations are arranged through one of several transplant centers in the U.S. Before being considered as a living donor, the person must undergo a complete physical and a psychosocial evaluation by the transplant center where they intend to make the donation. The internet is a good source of living donor information on sites such as the United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS) – [www.unos.org](http://www.unos.org), on the Living Donation page ([www.unos.org/living\\_donation.asp](http://www.unos.org/living_donation.asp)), and the National Kidney Foundation ([www.kidney.org/atoz/atozItem.cfm?id=48](http://www.kidney.org/atoz/atozItem.cfm?id=48)). UNOS is the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Health Resources and Services Administration's Federal contractor that manages the Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network (OPTN) – [www.optn.org](http://www.optn.org). UNOS has a toll-free number for any questions you may have about living donation, transplant centers, or the transplant process. The number is 1-888-TXINFO1 (894-6361).

Total body donation generally is not an option if you choose to be an organ and tissue donor. Eye donors still may be accepted. Also, there are a few medical schools and research organizations that may still accept an organ donor for research. If you wish to donate your entire body, you should contact the medical organization of your choice directly and make arrangements. Medical schools, research facilities, and other agencies study bodies to understand how disease affects human beings. This research is vital to saving and improving lives.

Donation will not disfigure the body and does not interfere with having an open casket service. Surgical techniques are used to retrieve organs and tissues, and all incisions are closed.

Organs cannot be sold! The National Organ Transplant Act (Public Law 98-507) makes it illegal to sell human organs and tissues in the U.S. Violators are subject to fines and imprisonment. One reason Congress made this law was to make sure the

wealthy do not have an unfair advantage for obtaining donated organs and tissues.

Non-resident aliens can both donate and receive organs in the U.S. Organs are given to patients according to medical need, not citizenship. In 2001, 334 (2.7 percent) of the 12,375 organ donors were non-resident aliens. In this same year, 259 (one percent) of the 23,998 transplants performed were on non-resident aliens.

**DELAWARE RESIDENTS:** You can request to become an organ/tissue donor by filling out an online registration form or when you apply for or renew your driver's license. Once you have completed the form and submitted the request, the data will be delivered to a qualified Department of Motor Vehicles associate, who will review your request and update your records. There is no fee to place the organ donor designation on your driver's license or photo ID. Your driving record will reflect your new Organ Donor status. Upon renewing your license, your license will show "ORGAN DONOR" in green letters next to your photo. A brochure will be sent to you containing a Uniform Organ Donor Card, which you should fill out and carry on your person. This is considered legal consent for organ/tissue donation. In order to prevent confusion and misunderstanding upon your death, tell your family of your decision to be an organ/tissue donor, so this designation may not be revoked at the time of death according to Delaware law. More nationwide information is available at [www.organdonor.gov](http://www.organdonor.gov). For more localized information, to go [www.donors1.org](http://www.donors1.org).

So . . . make it known that you want to be donor. Register with your State Donor Registry, if one is available; say YES to donation on your driver's license; tell your family, friends, physician, and faith leader that you want to be a donor; and fill out and sign a donor card, have it witnessed, and carry it with you.

*(Information from the State of Delaware and HRSA websites)    \*\*7806\*\*    \*\*1180\*\*    \*\*3937\*\**

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## **Flood/rising water**

**(Continued from Page 7)**

- If you have to leave your home, remember these evacuation tips:
- Do not walk through moving water. Six inches of moving water can make you fall. If you have to walk in water, walk where the water is not moving. Use a stick to check the firmness of the ground in front of you.

**(Continued on Page 10)**

# CAT BOX



By Cathleen McLean, Payroll Administrator

## Economic stimulus

For quite some time now we have been hearing about the Economic Stimulus Payments being given to us by the Federal Government in an attempt to help stimulate our economy. Many folks are not sure if they will be receiving this payment.

According to the IRS website almost everyone who filed a 2007 tax return qualifies for the Economic Stimulus Payment. The payments are to begin being sent out in May. If you are curious if you qualify you can go to the IRS.gov website and click on the Stimulus Payment icon. If you scroll down on the second page there is a section that gives scenarios based on your income and filing status.

If you know you are eligible but are not quite sure as to the amount you will receive take a look down the same page of the IRS.gov website for the Payment Calculator. Make sure that you have your 1040/1040EZ available to answer the questions. (My only note to that calculation is that it appears that it is only giving you the amount for an individual and not for a married couple.)

After you click on the Economic Stimulus Payment icon, scroll down the second page until you see a section that provides a schedule of payments based on the last two digits of your social security number. This section further explains the criteria as to who will get the amount expected by direct deposit or by check.

Everyone that has filed a tax return should be receiving notice as to their eligibility to receive this payment. If you have not filed your 2007 tax return make sure you do so by April 15, 2008. If you have any questions about moving around in the IRS.gov website give me a call at 744-2387.

## High Praise

High Five to KRISTINA RINKENBERG, Libraries Division, for a lengthy letter from a language arts teacher at Dover Air Base Middle School for her being "knowledgeable and charming" at the County library's booth at the school's L.A. Lapalooza Festival of Words to help prepare students for the upcoming DSTP. She made a great impression and created much buzz about the County library. *Great job!!!*

# POLICY REVIEW



By Allan Kujala, Personnel Director

## §4-4 Use of County vehicles.

Kent County Levy Court Policy 4-4 requires employees to have a properly issued drivers license and be of sound body and mind while operating any County-owned vehicle. The same is true if operating a personal vehicle while on County business. The policy further requires employees to operate vehicles in a safe manner at the posted speed limit. Seat belts must also be worn at all times.

Whenever an employee operates a personal vehicle on County business, the individual is eligible for reimbursement of mileage at the allowable federal rate. Non-County employee passengers are not permitted in County vehicles except as provided in the policy.

Appropriate personal errands along the commuting route are permitted under the policy, but employees on vacation or extended sick leave must leave the vehicle at the worksite for use by other employees.

Employees with commuting privileges must maintain a daily mileage log and will be assessed a value for taxation purposes near the end of the calendar year.

## Flood/rising water

(Continued from Page 10)

- Do not drive into flooded areas. If floodwaters rise around your car, abandon the car and move to higher ground if you can do so safely. You and the vehicle can be quickly swept away.

### Driving Flood Facts

The following are important points to remember when driving in flood conditions:

- Six inches of water will reach the bottom of most passenger cars causing loss of control and possible stalling.
- A foot of water will float many vehicles.
- Two feet of rushing water can carry away most vehicles including sport utility vehicles (SUV's) and pick-ups.

# Tech Talk

(Continued from Page 8)

To send data across the internet at the speed of light.

These services are similar in that they'll offer you super-fast Web surfing; at least three times as fast as dial-up. They'll also allow you to download files, stream video or send sizable emails multiple times faster than dial-up. So, you can finally send those pictures of your kiddies to mom and dad.

## HOW TO CHOOSE...

**Learn about your choices.** Find out what services and providers are available in your area. You can check availability for Verizon at <http://www22.verizon.com/Residential/Broadband> and <http://www.comcast.com> for Comcast. Chances are you'll have just one DSL provider available--your phone company--and just one cable Internet provider.

**Weigh speed vs. cost.** For many users, DSL service with a download speed of 1.5 megabits per second (Mbps) is sufficient and costs \$20 to \$30 monthly. If you're on a tight budget, for about the price of dial-up you might find DSL with download speeds of less than a megabit per second.

Did you know your cable speed will vary depending on the usage pattern of your neighbors? Cable modem services share bandwidth among subscribers in a locality. The same cable line connects to many households. If many of your neighbors access the Internet simultaneously, it is a distinct possibility that cable speeds for you (and them) will decrease significantly during those times.

If you regularly download videos and other large files, consider higher-speed DSL, cable, or fiber (download speeds of about 5 to 20 Mbps), typically for \$30 to \$50 per month. If fiber is available and priced similarly to cable, you might want to consider it to give yourself an alternative for TV service, should that become available on fiber.

The blazingly fast fiber service that is often heralded as vanquishing cable offers download speeds of up to 50 Mbps. But such higher speeds can come at quite a premium. For example, Verizon recently charged as much as \$200 monthly, depending on where you live, for one of its highest-speed services. And most Internet users don't yet need that kind of speed. For \$35 per month, you can expect between 5 and 10 Mbps download speed and 2 Mbps upload.

The need for such speed is bound to be more widespread in the future as computer users demand faster and faster connections to accommodate downloading high-definition movies and other band-

width-intensive applications. But by then, new, higher-speed offerings from cable providers as well as fiber-DSL hybrid services from telephone companies should also be more widely available.

If fiber isn't available, it might be worth calling your local phone company to find out whether it's on the way. Verizon plans to offer FiOS to about 18 million households by 2010 in states where it currently provides phone service.

Some high-speed plans aren't recommended for use with computers running Windows 98 or ME. Before signing up, ask your provider to give you a real-world speed estimate based on your equipment and other factors. Inquire about whether there is anything you can do to speed up your connection. Ask neighbors who subscribe to the same service about their experience.

**What's the total cost?** The first bill for bundled services may be higher than expected because it includes installation, activation, and other fees. Because most companies bill in advance, they may also be a charge for an additional month's service. Consumers should also expect to pay taxes, surcharges and monthly fees for cable boxes and remotes and other add-ons they may have selected. Ask the company to calculate and itemize a bill for the first and second month and trim extras that may not be really needed.

**Consider your other services.** There's a good chance you can save by subscribing to more than one service from the same provider. Cable companies typically offer double- and triple-play packages that include television, and either Internet or telephone or both. For all three, promotional prices can have you paying as little as \$100 a month for as long as a year.

Telephone companies already have double-play packages that include telephone and Internet service. They also are beginning to offer triple-play deals over their own lines as they upgrade their networks and obtain permission from local and state authorities to include video. This year, providers are expected to begin rolling out quad-play packages that add cellular service. For consumers, the main benefits of bundling are cost savings and the convenience of paying just one bill.

However, at the end of the promotion, consumers may automatically be charged for those extras unless the company is instructed to cancel them. Near the end of the promotion, consumers should review the package and decide whether they want premium services when they sign up. *Consumer Reports* recommends haggling to keep the same or a similar rate or

(Continued on Page 14)



# Welcome to Levy Court!



Name: RICHARD ALLEN



**Job:** Paramedic I  
**Date hired:** February 25, 2008  
**Education:** Private pilot technical school; SUNY Stony Brook Paramedic Program  
**What I like most about my new job:** A better salary with better hours.  
**Greatest accomplishment:** My wedding and the birth of my daughter.

**Greatest challenges or obstacles:** Surviving in Florida

**Future goals:** Provide a good life for my family.

**Person/event that most inspired me in my career:** A friend that took me under his wing when I first started in EMS.

**If I had it to do over, I would have done this differently:** Not move to Florida

**I'm most relaxed and happy when I'm doing this:** Spending time with my family

**Family:** Wife, Rori; daughter, Teagan; stepdaughter, Dana; and stepson, Thomas

**Most recent movie enjoyed:** Vantage Point

**Favorite TV show:** 24

**Favorite sport:** Football

**Favorite meal:** Anything with mashed potatoes and gravy

**Favorite music:** Anything

**Favorite saying or slogan:** "Yo."

**Who has had the most impact on my life:** My wife.

**A dream I have is to:** Be debt free.

**If I won a million dollars I would:** Buy a house.

**You'd be surprised to learn that I:** Have nothing surprising to tell you about.

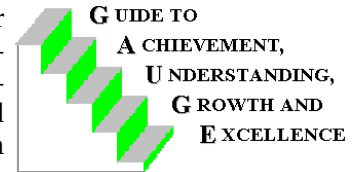
**The most adventurous thing I've ever done is:** A responder to the 9/11 tragedy.

**Words that describe me:** Easy going and laid back.

## G.A.U.G.E. employee performance appraisal forms due by May 16

By Allan Kujala, Personnel Director

By now it is hoped that most employees and their supervisors have either started the annual performance appraisal process or at least reviewed the G.A.U.G.E. system handbook, because the forms are due in the Personnel Office by May 16.



The GAUGE format, introduced seven years ago, has been used consistently throughout the years with great success. Employees who were having performance problems either began to measure up or found themselves without a job.

The format has been praised as more objective with scoring more easily understood by both parties, the employee and the appraiser.

The comprehensive performance appraisal system rates each employee on "Core Value Competencies", such as customer service; ethics and integrity; job knowledge and skills; professionalism; and self-management along with specific job types.

The GAUGE evaluation forms, which are recommended to be also completed by employees, are on the County's intranet on the V: drive, in the *CountyInfo* folder, in *Forms* file under *GAUGEappraisal-Form* in Word® or *GAUGE Eval Forms* in Excel®.

## Kings Dominion offers discounts

(Continued from Page 4)

online with a credit card at [www.KingsDominion.com](http://www.KingsDominion.com). Click on **tickets**, then **corporate partner**. The Kent County ID is: FUN-TIX. "Good-Any-Day Tickets" are valid any regular park operating day in 2008. The "Pay Once, Visit Twice Tickets" are valid any TWO regular park operating days in 2008 (this ticket is non-transferable and requires a validation signature on entry and re entry).

You may print out your eTicket and bring it with you to the Park. Purchases can be made up to the day of your visit. There is no service charge. If you choose to have your tickets mailed to you, they must be purchased seven (7) days in advance. There is a \$5.00 service charge for this service.

## Easter Egg Hunt Contest

Congratulations to TAMI EDWARDS, WILSON BRANHAM, JASON MacDONALD, and KRISTINA RINKENBERG, who were the lucky employees finding a free movie ticket in the annual Easter Egg Hunt contest last month.

## BENEFIT BLURBS

By Sophie F. Dear, Personnel Technician II

This month I'm going to review a subject that's near and dear to my heart -- Delaware **worker's compensation.**



When completing your accident report, please check any dates in your report, most importantly the date of the accident. In the first few months of a new year, sometimes it is habit to write the number of the previous year when completing a form. However, with a worker's comp carrier, this can cause delay in payment of bills if the claim is submitted to the wrong carrier based on an incorrect date of loss.

Please write or print legibly when completing the report, and include as much detail as possible, such as left or right, upper or lower, which finger, etc. when applicable. If I have a detailed written report from the employee, it could save you from being interrupted at work by a call from me to request the details of your injury.

This year the County will participate in the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Survey of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses – Calendar Year 2008*. While compiling information for this survey throughout the year, I will need more information than in currently requested on the County's Accident Report. Please keep in touch with me regarding the number of days away from work, whether there was a job transfer or job restrictions as a result of the injury/illness, and how many days you were transferred or restricted.

Reproductive Associates of Delaware (RAD) has notified Blue Cross Blue Shield of Delaware (BCBSD) that they will terminate their contract with BCBSD effective May 15, 2008. BCBSD continues to negotiate in good faith toward a new contract with RAD that is fair to the practice as well as their members. Members will have access to other fertility providers in our network: Dr. Jeffrey Russell, in Newark, DE, and Dr. Albert El-Roeiy, in Upland, PA. BCBSD's Care Management Department is developing continuity of care plans for patients currently receiving services through RAD that will include a plan to transition care to other local providers if necessary. Additionally, those BCBSD members with PPO coverage will have access to the national BlueCard® network, which includes highly respected providers throughout the region and country.

## FY09 budget debated

(Continued from Page 3)

formance and includes the addition of three new positions, continuance of a Paramedic Trainee program, reclassification of another six positions, reassignment of one Finance position to the Assessment office, and funding deferral of six vacant positions for one year.

The document incorporates an \$1.2 million pension fund contribution, a \$475,000 retiree benefits fund contribution, as well as a 9.9% health insurance increase with continued 60% dependent cost sharing, and normal operating cost increases. No tax increase was proposed, but the Commissioners continue to be concerned what the General Assembly might do this year to balance the State budget and find revenues to improve State roads.

"This year, perhaps more than any in recent memory, presented major challenges for the budget team," commented Petit de Mange, "but an overarching sense of shared responsibility among the Department Managers enabled us to address critical needs, main high levels of service for our customers, and reduce overall spending in a significant way. This budget represents a total team effort, and I am very proud of the entire Kent County Team."

Levy Court is scheduled to hold a public hearing on the proposed FY2009 Budget on April 22 beginning at 7:15 p.m. in the Levy Court Chamber.

## Tech Talk

(Continued from Page 12)

to keep services that the company may automatically delete once the promotion is over.

**What are the consequences for dropping or changing services?** Even with providers that don't require contracts, such as many cable companies, rates can rise if one of the bundled services is dropped or changed. Ask about penalties or other problems that may occur if services are dropped or modified prematurely.

**Look for features.** Consider whether a service offers multiple e-mail accounts, spam and spyware blocking, parental controls, and a personal Web page. If you travel often, look for a broadband service such as EarthLink's or BellSouth's that includes dial-up access. Also look for Web mail, which lets you access e-mail from any Internet-enabled computer.

**Test-drive it.** Once you have a new service, if there's a trial period, test the features before it expires. If possible, maintain your old account during that period in case you want to go back.



**Kelly  
Blanchies**



**Shelby Burd**



**Connie Butler**



**Jen Donavon**



**Mari Fabres**



**Nancy Glenn**



**Cynthia  
Goldsboro**



**Jennifer  
Graham**



**Wendy  
Haywood**



**Jill Johns**



**Evelyn Jopp**



**Charlotte  
Lindquist**



**Gale Maas**



**Barbara  
Miller**



**Jan Morris**



**Christina  
Morton**



**Kathy  
Phinney**



**Angel Short**



**Nicole  
Vautard**



**Patty  
Virdin**



**Jayne  
Zeranski**

## County administrative staff to be honored in April

Allan Kujala, Personnel Director

Wednesday, April 23rd is an extra special day and every office assistant knows it. It is Administrative Professionals Day, and the Personnel Office will coordinate a show of appreciation for the clerical staff by all Kent County employees.

Photographs of all the hardworking and dedicated secretaries employed by Kent County will be on display in the Kent County Administrative Office Complex lobby to introduce the public to the most important person in each County office.

Finally, Kent County employees will choose their favorite administrative professional and that special person will receive a special prize package.

The employees nominated for Kent County's Favorite Administrative Professional include: KELLY BLANCHIES, Sheriff's Office; SHELBY BURD, Finance; CONNIE BUTLER, Libraries; JEN DONAVON, Planning; MARI FABRES, Wastewater Facilities; NANCY GLENN, Inspections & Enforcement; CYNTHIA GOLDSBORO, Sheriff's Office; JENNIFER GRA-

HAM, Emergency Medical Services; WENDY HAYWOOD, Parks & Recreation; JILL JOHNS, Planning Services; EVELYN JOPP, Administration; CHARLOTTE LINDQUIST, Sheriff's Office; GALE MAAS, Administration; BARBARA MILLER, Engineering; JAN MORRIS, Administration; CHRISTINA MORTON, Inspections & Enforcement; KATHY PHINNEY, Administration; ANGEL SHORT, Community Services; NICOLE VAUTARD, Emergency Management; PATTY VIRDIN, Planning; and JAYNE ZERANSKI, Public Works.

The nominations were limited to those full-time Kent County clerical employees with the position title "Administrative Secretary", "Senior Secretary", "Secretary", or "Clerk". Other employees may perform similar duties and their efforts are greatly appreciated.

Cast your vote in person in the Personnel Office or cast your e-ballot by e-mailing YVONNE MESSINA with your vote for your Favorite Administrative Professional beginning on Monday, April 7 and ending Monday, April 21.



## SOME ANSWERS TO THOSE NAGGING QUESTIONS

By Allan Kujala, Personnel Director

**Q.** *I recently attended a national training conference and learned a lot, but was wondering what the deadline is for submitting my required travel expense report?*

**A.** Great question. The detailed travel expense report should be promptly submitted to the Finance Department, since the policy says five days. Besides it can sometimes be very difficult to locate the receipts you need for the report weeks after your return.

**Q.** *I have been getting grief from my supervisor about the extra amount I had to pay for the hotel at the conference. She says I will have to pay the difference myself. How is that fair?*

**A.** I understand that you were a little tardy making the necessary hotel reservations and as a consequence you did not get one of the limited number of conference rates for the last nights of the conference. The travel policy very clearly requires employees to make conference arrangements early to take advantage of discounts. I agree with your supervisor and you should pay the difference, since a co-worker got the lower rate by making prompt reservations.

**Q.** *But I heard about another office that got their hotel rate fully paid for a conference, even though it was higher than the advertised "conference" rate.*

**A.** I am aware of that situation and while the reservation was made before the cut-off date, the hotel sold out early and the employee had to go to a nearby hotel. In that instance the employee promptly submitted the request to attend the conference and when they finally got approval proceeded to make the reservation, only to find the hotel had filled up. In that case, the employee did all he could to take advantage of the lower rates. I recall another situation where the October conference could not be reserved until the new fiscal year started on July 1 and the lower cost rooms were sold out by then. In that case, the County paid the higher rate.

**Q.** *Speaking of training conferences, could you explain the whole compensated travel time thing to me.*

**A.** Sure. As amazing as this may sound, if you are an hourly employee and traveling to a conference on a Sunday during normal 8—5 working hours, you

must be paid for those hours. The same is true for any travel during a normal Monday through Friday workday. If you were traveling after normal working hours, such as taking the red eye flight to California, your travel time is not compensable. Also keep in mind, that the drive to the airport is not compensable—it is considered commuting, although the hour or so you have to be at the airport in advance of departure is. These weird provisions are set out in the federal Fair Labor Standards Act. You must remember to note these hours on your time sheet. Supervisors concerned about overtime—and they should all be, can reduce that liability by requiring the employee to flex off the hours later in the week. So, if you travel on Sunday, your boss could instruct you to take the day off on Thursday or Friday of the same week when you return to avoid overtime.

**Q.** *A co-worker recently spoke to you about an issue in our office. You gave him some excellent advice, but he did not do as you suggested. Why?*

**A.** Often employees seek me out instead of talking to their own supervisor or department head, who is usually best suited to handle any issue in the specific workplace. I often hear from employees that they are frustrated their supervisor has allowed a problem to persist. But I think employees would be pleasantly surprised by the positive reaction they would get from a supervisor or department head for bringing a concern to his/her attention. Whatever the issue is, department heads want the office to work well and they will take responsibility for making that happen. It is my personal observation that supervisors react better to a complaint raised by a staff member than one raised by me.

**Q.** *I recently heard someone say that you were not very personable, but you were fair. What do you think of that description?*

**A.** I've been called the opposite—at least on the "fair" phrase.

**Q.** *I sometimes cannot complete assigned tasks because the mail room closes at 4:30 p.m. Why can't it stay open later?*

**A.** Interesting question. I will pass your query along to someone to consider.